Lackluster growth in agriculture and new farm policy

1571. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:
SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last five to ten years the stock of wheat has been declining due to lacklustre growth in agriculture and during 2007 Government resorted to wheat import of more than 10 lakh tonnes at a much higher price than what we have been paying to our farmers;

(b) if so, what are the man-made constraints in increasing our production of wheat other than perennial floods and droughts; and

(c) how the new farm policy, announced in November 2007, will give fillip towards more production and better crop yields?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) Procurement higher than the offtake had resulted in a build-up of excessive stocks of foodgrains during the two successive years of 2001-02 and 2002-03. Subsequently, however, due to increased offtake under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other welfare schemes, stocks of foodgrains stood at 18.8 million tonnes on January 1, 2006, lower than the buffer stock norm of 20 million tonnes. However, the stocks of foodgrains increased to 19.2 million tonnes on January 1, 2008. Due to rapid rise in income in developing countries, low output stocks and drought conditions in wheat producing countries and increased shipping costs raised the landed cost of imported grains.

(b) The common constraints in increasing production of wheat include lack of adequate irrigation; genetic erosion; weak linkage between research & extension; soil degradation; limited credit access and insufficient post-harvest infrastructure.

(c) The National Policy for Farmers 2007 contains policy prescriptions for improvement in production and profitability of farming and for better crop yields. Some of these provisions are maximizing yield and income per unit of irrigation water in all crop production programmes, rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharge, provision of good quality seeds and disease free planting material, establishment of a National Seed Grid (NSG), timely, adequate and easy reach of farm credit/loan to the farmers.

Bird-flu in Andhra Pradesh

1572. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRASEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the bird-flu lands poultry industry in Andhra Pradesh in soup;

(b) if so, the facts thereof;

(c) the reasons for not controlling bird-flu in the State;

(d) the estimated loss thereon; and

(e) the assistance given to the poultry industry so far?